

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing, reexamination and reconsideration of the subject application are respectfully requested in light of the amendments above and the comments which follow.

As correctly noted in the Office Action Summary, claims 1, 4-14, 16, 17 and 19-29 were pending. By the present response, claims 6, 7, 20 and 24 have been amended, and claims 1, 4, 5, 11-14, 16, 17, 19 and 25-29 canceled. Thus, upon entry of the present response, claims 6-10 and 20-24 remain pending and await further consideration on the merits.

Support for the foregoing amendments can be found, for example, in at least the following locations in the original disclosure: the original claims.

Entry of this amendment is appropriate pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.116 for at least the following reasons: (1) the amendments clearly place the application in condition for allowance; and (2) do not require a new search or reexamination.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102/§103

Claims 1, 4-5, 11-14, 16-17, 19 and 25-29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over EP 0 902 103 A1 to Nippon Steel Corporation (hereafter "*EP '103*") on the grounds set forth in paragraph 3 of the Official Action. For at least the reasons noted below, this rejection should be withdrawn.

By the present response, the above-listed claims have all been canceled, thereby obviating the above-noted grounds for rejection.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that claims 6-10 and 20-24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, as noted in paragraph 4 of the Official Action.

By the present response, claims 6, 7, 20 and 24 have been rewritten in independent form, including all the limitations of the base claim. The remaining claims depend either directly or indirectly therefrom. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

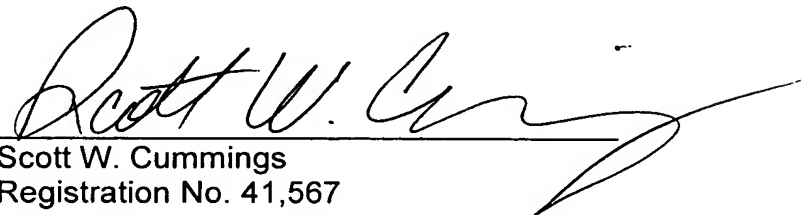
From the foregoing, further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner feel that any issues remain, it is requested that the undersigned be contacted so that any such issues may be adequately addressed and prosecution of the instant application expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

BUCHANAN INGERSOLL PC

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